

## Democracy and Progressivism

Not all progressives agreed with the efficiency progressives. Many believed that society needed more democracy, not less. They wanted to make elected officials more responsive to voters.

**"Laboratory of Democracy"** Political reform first came to the state level when Wisconsin voters elected Republican Robert La Follette to be governor. La Follette used his office to attack the way political parties ran their conventions. Because party bosses controlled the selection of convention delegates, they also controlled which candidates were chosen to run for office. La Follette pressured the state legislature to require each party to hold a direct primary, in which all party members could vote for a candidate to run in the general election.

La Follette's great reform success gave Wisconsin a reputation as the "laboratory of democracy." La

Follette claimed, "Democracy is based upon knowledge. The only way to beat the boss ... is to keep the people thoroughly informed."

Inspired by La Follette, progressives in other states pushed for similar electoral changes. To force state legislators to respond to voters, three new reforms were introduced in many states. The initiative allowed a group of citizens to introduce legislation and required the legislature to vote on it. The referendum allowed proposed legislation to be submitted to the voters for approval. The recall allowed voters to demand a special election to remove an elected official from office before his or her term had expired.

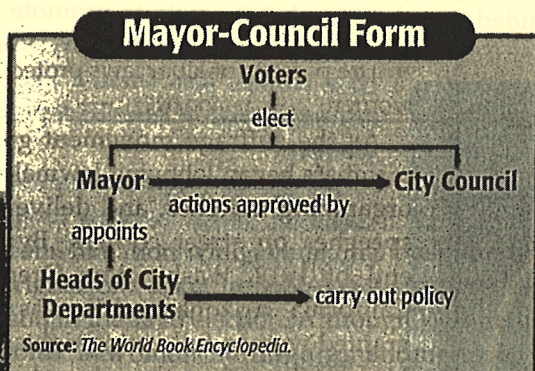
### GOVERNMENT

**Direct Election of Senators** Another reform the progressives favored affected the federal government—the direct election of senators. As originally written, the United States Constitution directed each state legislature to elect two senators from that state. Political machines or large trusts often influenced the election of senators, who then repaid their supporters with federal contracts and jobs. By the early 1900s, muckraker Charles Edward Russell charged that the Senate had become "only a chamber of buffers for industrialists and financiers."

To counter Senate corruption, progressives called for the direct election of senators by all state voters. In 1912 Congress passed a direct-election amendment. Although the direct election of senators was intended to end corruption, it also removed one of the state legislatures' checks on federal power. In 1913 the amendment was ratified, becoming the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution.

### Reading Check

**Evaluating** What was the impact of the Seventeenth Amendment? What problem was it intended to solve?



## The Suffrage Movement

In July 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Stanton proposed to the delegates that their first priority should be getting women the right to vote. The movement for women's voting rights became known as the suffrage movement. **Suffrage** is the right to vote.

Woman suffrage was an important issue for progressives. Although the suffrage movement began well before progressivism emerged, many progressives joined the movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s.



**Early Problems** The suffrage movement got off to a slow start. Women suffragists were accused of being unfeminine and immoral. Several were physically attacked. The movement also remained weak because many of its supporters were abolitionists as well. In the years before the Civil War, they preferred to concentrate on abolishing slavery.

After the Civil War, the Republicans in Congress introduced the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution to protect the voting rights of African Americans. Several leaders of the woman suffrage movement had wanted these amendments worded to give women the right to vote as well. They were bitterly disappointed when Republicans refused.

The debate over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments split the suffrage movement into two groups: the National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe. The first group

wanted to focus on passing a constitutional amendment allowing woman suffrage. The second group believed that the best strategy was to convince state governments to give women the right to vote before trying to amend the Constitution.

This split reduced the movement's effectiveness. In 1878 a constitutional amendment granting woman suffrage was introduced in Congress, but it failed to pass. Few state governments granted women the right to vote either. By 1900 only Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Colorado had granted women full voting rights.

**The Movement Builds Support** In 1890 the two groups united to form the **National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)**. The movement still did not make significant gains, however, until about 1910. Part of the problem was convincing women to become politically active. As the Progressive movement began, however, many middle-class women concluded that they needed the vote to promote social reforms they favored. Many working-class women also wanted the vote to ensure passage of labor laws protecting women.

As the suffrage movement grew, members began lobbying lawmakers, organizing marches, and delivering speeches on street corners. By the end of 1912, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Kansas had granted women full voting rights. On March 3, 1913, the day before President Wilson's inauguration, suffragists marched in Washington, D.C., to draw attention to their cause.

**Alice Paul**, a Quaker social worker who headed NAWSA's congressional committee, had organized the Washington march. Paul wanted to use protests to force President Wilson to take action on suffrage. Her activities alarmed other members of NAWSA who wanted to negotiate with Wilson. Paul left NAWSA and formed the **National Woman's Party**. Her supporters picketed the White House, blocked sidewalks, chained themselves to lampposts, and went on hunger strikes if arrested.

In 1915 **Carrie Chapman Catt** became NAWSA's leader. Catt developed what she called her "Winning Plan" to mobilize the suffrage

## Profiles IN HISTORY

### Susan B. Anthony

1820–1906

Susan B. Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts, to Quaker parents. Quakers were generally more supportive of women's rights than some other groups, and so Anthony was able to receive a good education. She finished her schooling at the age of 17. Anthony then worked as a teacher in New York, but she was fired after protesting that her pay was one-fifth the amount of her male colleagues. She found another job, however, as a principal at New York's Canajoharie Academy. Between 1848 and 1863, Anthony was involved in both the temperance and abolitionist movements.

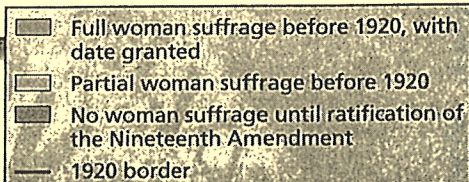
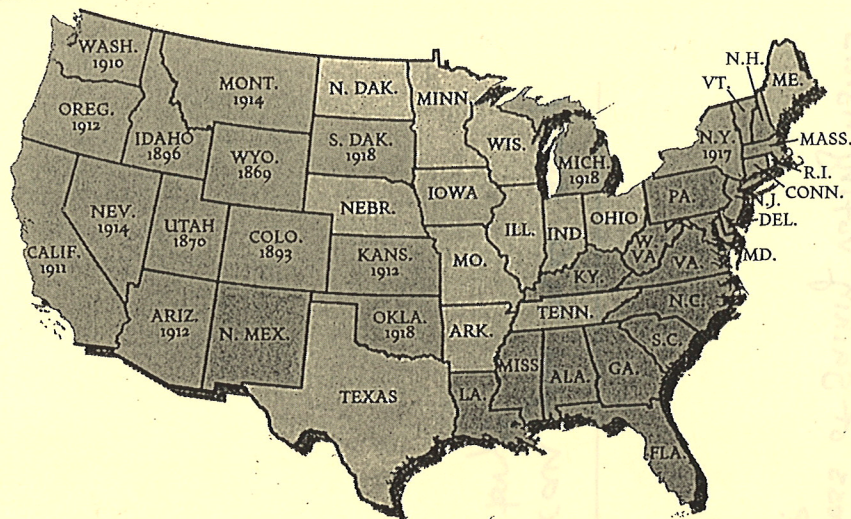
Her involvement in the drive for women's equality began in 1851 after she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Between 1854 and 1860, the duo attempted to change discriminatory laws in New York. In 1869 Anthony and Stanton organized the National Woman Suffrage Association and began promoting an amendment to grant woman suffrage. Anthony and 12 other women illegally cast votes in the presidential election of 1872. They were arrested and convicted, but the judge feared that

the jury would rule in Anthony's favor. He dismissed the jury and fined Anthony instead. She refused to pay the \$100 fine, but the judge decided to let her go, afraid that appealing the case might generate sympathy for the suffrage movement.

In 1883 Anthony traveled to Europe, and she helped form the International Council of Women in 1888. This organization represented the rights of women in 48 countries. She died in Rochester, New York, in 1906. Though Anthony did not live to see her dream of woman suffrage become reality, the United States government honored her by placing her portrait on a new dollar coin in 1979.







## Geography Skills

- Interpreting Maps** Which region led the way in granting woman suffrage?
- Applying Geography Skills** Based on the map, what region would you suggest had the least amount of campaigning for woman suffrage?

movement nation-wide in one final push to gain voting rights. She also threw NAWSA's support behind Wilson in the 1916 election. Although Wilson did not endorse a woman suffrage amendment, he supported the Democratic Party's call for states to give women the vote.

**The Nineteenth Amendment** As more states granted women the right to vote, Congress began to favor a constitutional amendment. In 1918 the House of Representatives passed a woman suffrage amendment. Wilson then addressed the Senate, asking it to vote for the amendment. Despite his efforts, the amendment failed to pass by two votes.

During the midterm elections of 1918, Catt used NAWSA's resources to defeat two anti-suffrage senators. The following year, in June 1919, the Senate finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment by just more than the two-thirds vote needed. On August 26, 1920, after three-fourths of the states had voted to ratify it, the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote went into effect.

**Reading Check** **Evaluating** How successful were women in lobbying to achieve passage of the Nineteenth Amendment?

## Social Welfare Progressivism

While many progressives focused on reforming the political system, others focused on social problems, such as crime, illiteracy, alcohol abuse, child labor, and the health and safety of Americans. These social welfare progressives created charities to help the poor and disadvantaged. They also pushed for new laws they hoped would fix social problems.

**The Campaign Against Child Labor** Probably the most emotional Progressive issue was the campaign against child labor. Children had always worked on family farms, but the factory work that many children performed was monotonous, and the conditions were often unhealthy. In 1900 over 1.7 million children under the age of 16 worked outside the home. Reformers established a National Child Labor Committee in 1904 to work to abolish child labor.

Muckraker John Spargo's 1906 book *The Bitter Cry of the Children* presented detailed evidence on child labor conditions. He told of coal mines where thousands of "breaker boys" were hired at age 9 or 10 to pick slag out of coal and were paid 50¢ for a 10-hour



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"Iron Jawed Angels"  
Video Notes Sheet

What was the resistance to  
women gaining the right to vote?

What surprised or shocked you  
about the process of gaining voting rights  
in America?

Why did women risk their lives and  
sacrifice so much to gain voting  
rights?

What lessons can you take away  
from this story?